

The Professional

Volume 5, Issue 2

Inside

President's Message	1
Online Training	1-2
Membership Information	2
Calendar of Events	2
2001-2002 Board	2
Records Retention.....	3-5
Data Warehousing.....	5
October Event.....	5



President's Message...

America suffered the worst tragedy in its history during a time when most Californians were just preparing to do their daily routines. What we found that morning instead was the public living and seeing beyond belief, the deliberate destruction of the World Trade Center. A horrific display that most viewers first thought it to be a Hollywood type of imagery that regretfully and in fact was a reality that was virtually changing our lives. Americans are now grieving over loved ones and, though most of us never personally met those who lost their lives or sacrificed themselves to save others, we shed tears for them and are still saddened by it all. As a result of this terrorist act, I encourage you to reach out and give to the American Red Cross and any reputable organization to help in your own way for our fellow Americans in New York City.

The destruction of the World Trade Center also brought out a concern that is common to most of us that are records managers...destroyed paper documents that could leave an information void. The WTC was a repository of countless reams of information on companies and individuals that ended up on the streets of New York City. Passerby and rescue workers were picking up not only debris, but also records that included names, social security numbers, and other information that would normally be protected under the most common privacy protection laws.

A recent article appearing in the Los Angeles Times discusses the information loss as tragic as anyone could ever imagine. "There's a lot of paper-based information in offices," said John Jackson, head of data back-up services at disaster recovery firm

Comdisco, Inc., "We have really not, in the 17 years I've been in the industry, had a smoke-and-rubble event of this nature. This will test recovery plans in a way they have never been tested."

Are we prepared? Records Managers have talked and preached to their corporate officers about being prepared for a disaster and I am really sadden to say that this recent event is bringing to the forefront one of the oldest clichés..."I told you so." Records, regardless of their physical shape, form, or media, are still records and it is up to us to ensure of their preservation and protection for whatever the retention period may be. If we are to continue our lives and get back to business as President Bush is encouraging all Americans to do, take this opportunity to review existing guidelines and prescribe records management procedures deemed appropriate for your organization, private or public.

In the months to come, your local ARMA Chapter will seek speakers that can hopefully address many of your concerns and suggestions for safeguarding our records. In the meantime, please take the challenge to meet with management staff and once again begin the crusade for sound and secure Records Management principles!

- Fernando Vellanoweth, President

Online Training Opportunity

The Continuing Education Program Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto, presents a seven-week web course:

Introduction To Records & Information Management

This course, conducted entirely over the Internet, will introduce you to the



basic concepts of the profession including needs analysis, the record series, records inventory, classification, and records retention scheduling. It is designed for individuals with no previous experience in the area as well as those who are currently working with records in a junior capacity and who wish to augment their knowledge. Each Monday, the instructor distributes the material for the week. There are assignments to test your knowledge and regular live chat sessions. The instructor is available to answer all your questions.

The Instructor, Caroline Werle, a Certified Records Manager, is president of *Records & Information Management Services, Inc.*, offering consulting in records management, information and library services. *RIM Services* is also a licensed employment agency specializing in the recruitment of information professionals.

Dates: October 29 - December 10, 2001. Fee: \$295 (\$205 U.S.)

For more information, and to register, please visit our website at: <http://ce.fis.utoronto.ca/courses/rmintro.asp>.

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ARMA International would like you to verify your member information on their database.

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Upcoming Events Calendar

The Programs Committee is planning an aggressive and exciting calendar for the coming year (events scheduling & speakers/topics subject to change).

- 10/03/01 "e-Government Process Automation – DGS Bldg., downtown
- 10/16/01 Monthly Chapter Event, Sacramento Club – ARMA Expo 2001 Recap, Chuck Booz, presenter
- 11/20/01 Monthly Chapter Event, Sacramento Club.
- 01/02/02 "Document Management – a Practical Approach for Public Agencies" EDD Bldg. downtown. For more information: 925-552-5449, seminar@atdoc.com

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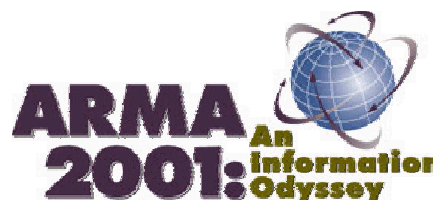
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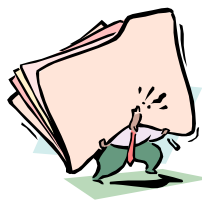
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Records Retention and Disposal

by Edwin Powell

It's no secret that the paperless office never got here. In fact, the very devices that were supposed to reduce our dependence on paper have increased paper consumption to record levels. We read, store, and dispose of so many paper documents each month that without a plan for processing them, we'd quickly be overwhelmed by a sea of paper.

A good records retention and disposal plan should address four questions:

1. What should you keep?
2. How should you store it?
3. How long should you keep it?
4. How should you dispose of it?

The first item is fundamentally important because it presents the first line of defense for stemming the flood tide of paper. Pages that can be disposed of immediately require no further handling.

For better or worse, most documents have a useful life span beyond a single reading and, therefore, must be archived for a certain amount of time. Deciding how to store documents that must be retained can depend on several factors, such as the length of time they must be kept, how frequently they'll need to be accessed, and whether the original document must be preserved.

While recently created documents and those referred to often are best kept in a conveniently located file cabinet, older documents that remain on hand just in case they're needed at some future date or are retained to fulfill a legal requirement can be stored more efficiently at a remote location. High-density storage

systems, essentially bookcases on sliding tracks, allow more material to be stored in the same space by eliminating spaces between shelving units. The units slide apart on tracks to allow access to a particular shelving unit. Care must be taken when installing these systems on upper floors so as not to exceed the building's weight-bearing limits.

If the physical bulk of material becomes a problem and you don't need to keep the originals, you can save space by storing copies electronically or on microforms - microfilm or microfiche. Both formats have advantages and disadvantages. Although the production of microforms is almost always an outsourced service, the media itself could last for a century or more under optimal storage conditions, and the data is accessible with a sufficiently powerful magnifying device.

Compared to the equipment necessary to make microforms, scanners and CD-recordable drives are fairly inexpensive, making electronic media an affordable alternative for an in-house operation. Research suggests good-quality CD media, stored under optimal conditions, should maintain data integrity for several decades - far longer than magnetic media such as diskettes or hard disks. The major downside to electronic data storage is the future availability of reader devices. Perfectly preserved data is useless unless legacy devices are maintained to access it. When was the last time you saw a PC with a 5.¼" floppy disk drive?

How long to keep documents is probably the trickiest part of the equation. For some types of documents, such as tax returns, there are specific guidelines based on the statute of limitations for an audit or other requirements. For other documents, the question to be answered is at what point does the

value of the information in the document drop below the cost of maintaining it? When the cost can no longer be justified, it's time to toss it.

Creating and adhering to a record retention schedule helps keep documents organized and accessible during their useful life span. It also establishes a guideline to determine when they've outlived their usefulness and a procedure for their disposal at the appropriate time.

Katie Voldal of the Rio Grande Chapter of ARMA (www.arma.org) has prepared a "Sample Records Retention and Disposition Schedule for a Law Firm's Administrative Records." According to the schedule, available on the Web at www.geocities.com/infomgmt_resource_list/lawfirm.htm, financial documents such as bank deposits and statements, cash receipts, canceled checks, payables records, reimbursable expense records, etc., should be kept a minimum of four years. Different sources suggest as long as seven years.

Other documents and their suggested retention schedules include: employee withholding certificates, seven years; tax bills and records, four years; tax returns, permanently; personnel benefit-related files, five years; employee time and attendance records, four years; audit and tax forms, seven years; correspondence, one year; employee retirement contribution records, four years after termination; employment applications and resumes, one year.

According to the National Association for Information Destruction (www.naidonline.org), business documents such as customer lists, price lists, sales statistics, drafts of bids, correspondence, and memos can contain information about business activity that could be damaging if it falls into the hands of a competitor.



Destroying such documents in a manner that obliterates the information contained in them is the only way to ensure confidential information will remain confidential.

If the material in question contains no confidential information, disposal can be as simple as dropping it in the nearest trash can - or recycling bin if you're feeling environmentally friendly. But how do you know what's safe to simply throw away? Sometimes outdated documents are worth far more to others than they are to you. Corporate espionage costs U.S. businesses more than \$7 billion a year, and the onus is on potential victims to protect themselves since "Dumpster divers" are protected under the law. Anything put out in the trash is considered fair game for anyone who wants to retrieve it.

Although documents are destroyed in the recycling process, recycling is by no means a secure means of document disposal as materials can remain intact for weeks or months, and even be sold more than once, before they're destroyed and the fiber content reclaimed. This is where secure disposal comes in - think shredders.

For decades, shredders have been the first line of defense when it comes to document security, largely replacing such methods as incineration. As concerns for protecting information have grown, the demands on shredder performance have continually increased. From strip-cut to crosscut to disintegrators, today's shredders reduce paper - and even computer disks, CDs, audio and video cassettes, and credit cards - to pieces so small even Humpty-Dumpty couldn't put them together again.

Shredders are differentiated from one another by such specifications as throat size (the size of the opening into which paper is inserted), speed, capacity (how much paper or other

materials the machine can shred at one time), and the size of the strips or particles the machine puts out.

Wider throat sizes are most often needed to shred large format documents like ledger sheets. Higher speed and larger capacity are the hallmarks of heavier duty departmental and industrial-grade shredders, and smaller strip or particle sizes translate into higher security. Strip-cut shredders have the simplest mechanisms but also provide the lowest degree of security. With a little patience, it's fairly easy to piece together documents shredded in these machines. They're fine for less-sensitive documents, and material shredded in this manner has some secondary uses, such as padding for items in shipping boxes as well as animal bedding.

Crosscut shredders, which cut the strips into smaller pieces, are now the industry standard and are required under federal document security guidelines. These guidelines are periodically updated to require smaller maximum particle sizes. Although crosscut shreds don't offer much in the way of secondary uses - they're frequently rejected by recyclers because they may contain foreign materials like staples, paper-clips, and plastic from envelope windows - they pack tighter than strips, allowing more material to go into a single bag for less frequent emptying.

Disintegrators represent the state of the art in document destruction, reducing materials to fine particles only a few millimeters in size. In addition to destroying paper documents, these machines are used in industrial settings to destroy outdated, damaged, and off-spec products and packaging for everything from toys to medicines.

In choosing a shredding strategy, deciding on the right hardware is essential. An all-too-common

mistake made by first-time shredder buyers is to purchase a machine too small for the task at hand. Experts in the field recommend saving money and frustration by buying your second shredder first.

For small amounts of highly sensitive material, a desk-side personal shredder is a good choice because documents can be destroyed without leaving the office in which they're stored. For higher volume demands, a larger capacity departmental shredder is the answer. As with equipment like networked laser printers, the additional expense of the more robust hardware can usually be justified by sharing the use of it among multiple employees.

Although some manufacturers are now producing shredders designed to blend with office décor - thus making them more suitable for placement in more public areas of the office - concerns such as noise levels and the security of unshredded documents should be taken into consideration when deciding where to place a departmental shredder.

Office shredders are great for day-to-day destruction of small amounts of material, but they usually lack the capacity to handle archived materials that must be destroyed by the boxful. If your organization's document destruction policy calls for periodic purging and shredding of vast amounts of material, outsourcing the process may be an effective way to get the job done without tying up inordinate amounts of employees' time that's better spent on other tasks.

A number of companies offer secure shredding services, either on-site or off-site. These companies are typically bonded and issue a certificate of destruction to document the job's completion. They usually offer scheduled collection services and often provide lockable containers where materials



can be safely deposited and stored until they're picked up. With on-site shredding, the company arrives with a shredder-equipped truck and destroys documents on the spot.

This option is typically more expensive than off-site shredding because the truck-mounted shredding equipment is smaller and less robust than that found in a secure shredding facility and the shredding takes longer. Also, the material is most often shredded without sorting and isn't suitable for recycling. Any landfill fees are passed on to the customer. Off-site shredding at a secure facility allows the shredding service to sort materials prior to destroying them, separating recyclables that can be shredded and sold by the bale to offset the cost.

Edwin Powell is managing editor of OfficeSolutions Magazine

(article used with permission)



Attack on America: How We Can Help

The recent tragedies in New York and Washington, DC, have profoundly touched all our lives. ARMA members throughout the world are expressing their concerns, frustrations, and fears. The outpouring of support is heartwarming, and many are looking for ways to be more involved in the recovery. Many of our members are ready to help however they can, including with the salvaging of records. ARMA International has been in close contact with one of our members whose company had thousands of employees in the World Trade Center. He states that their first priority is their people. From there, they rebuild as quickly as possible. The immense magnitude of the destruction makes salvage

impossible. ARMA International has offered our services to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which has added us to their list of resources. Any organization needing assistance will contact headquarters. What else can we all do to help?

1. Both the American Red Cross and United Way have set up funds to assist the victims and their families. The American Red Cross, of course, is also in need of blood donors. Contact your local Red Cross and United Way offices for details on how you can contribute.
2. Professionally, those in the immediate areas may wish to volunteer professional support and services to help companies rebuild when the time comes. Contact your chapter president and help to coordinate volunteer efforts. Some vendors have reportedly offered manpower and space to help their clients regroup. There undoubtedly will be many opportunities to assist with the rebuilding, including providing education.

We are looking into other options for involvement and will keep you informed.

It is truly inspirational to see the country - indeed, the world - come together in this time of great need. As always, our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and rescue workers and their families most affected by these horrific events.

- ARMA International Headquarters

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Tuesday, October 16th, 2001

The Sacramento Club

400 Capitol Mall (Wells Fargo Bldg.), 6th Floor, Downtown

ARMA Expo 2001 - "An Information Odyssey" Recap

Chuck Booz, Presenter

12:00 noon - 1:15 p.m. (11:45 a.m. check-in)

Presentations (including lunch) - \$22.00.

Please indicate your entrée selection when you RSVP

- ☐ 1. Chicken Caesar Salad - romaine lettuce, grilled chicken, parmesan cheese & focaccia crouton w/caesar dressing
- ☐ 2. Sesame Chicken Stir Fry - mixed veggies and chicken breast w/stir-fry sauce & ginger fried rice

Vegetarian upon request.

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E-mail RSVP to Chuck Brabec at cbrabec@frk.com no later than 10/12/01, or contact Chuck at (800) 632-2350, x55136. Make check payable to the greater Sacramento Capitol Chapter (GSCC) and mail to Greater Sacramento Capitol Chapter, P.O. Box 15310, Sacramento, CA 95851-5310, or bring your payment with you to the event. *If you RSVP by 10/5/01, you can receive an invoice for the amount due prior to attending.* **NOTE: It is important that you RSVP so that we can make appropriate arrangements.**

Directions To The Sacramento Club

From I-5 north or south, take the Q Street exit. Proceed east on Q to 5th Street and turn left. Proceed north on 5th to N Street - Wells Fargo parking garage is between 4th and 5th on the left. The Sacramento Club will validate parking.

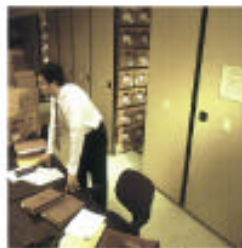


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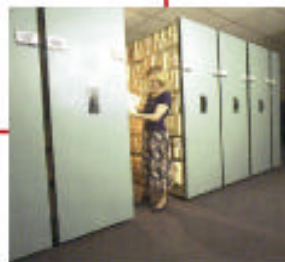
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